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Senate acts to protect Great Lakes

October 29, 2003 — The Michigan Senate today passed legislation banning the possession and release of transgenic and non-native fish in Michigan waters, Senator Beverly S. Hammerstrom (R-Temperance) announced.

Senate Bills 214, 215, 226 and 227, sponsored by Hammerstrom, address the issue of genetically engineered and foreign fish species and their devastating effects to Michigan's waterways.

In addition to damaging the natural fish ecosystems in this state, non-native fish carry exotic diseases and parasites that could disrupt and impair fish communities.

"It's important that Michigan leads the effort in protecting the Great Lakes," Hammerstrom said. "By moving forward with this legislation, we are continuing our commitment to act as good stewards of the Great Lakes and encouraging other governments to join us."

- SB 214 and 215 name a series of non-native fish species and provide for felony provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure. Prohibited species include the bighead carp, bitterling, black carp, grass carp, ide, Japanese weatherfish, rudd, silver carp, snakeheads and tench. The bills also prohibit the release or possession of hybrid eggs of these species.
- SB 226 prohibits the release of genetically engineered and non-native fish in Michigan waters and prohibits the importation of genetically-engineered variants of game fish not naturalized in Michigan without a special permit granted by the Department of Natural Resources.
- SB 227 sets forth various sentencing guidelines for violators, including a felony charge punishable by five years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine.

“As vice chair of the Senate Great Lakes Conservation Task Force, I had the opportunity to listen to the people of this state and hear their concerns about this issue,” Hammerstrom said. “The Great Lakes are a valuable resource to all of us and this legislation works to prevent the invasion of non-native species that would threaten this resource.”

The Senate Great Lakes Conservation Task Force held eight hearings throughout the state in 2001 to gather information from concerned residents in regard to water quality issues in the Great Lakes. In 2002, the bi-partisan task force issued its findings and recommendations in a report entitled “The Citizens’ Agenda...An Action Plan to Protect the Great Lakes.” A copy of the report is available at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hammerstrom.

The bills are now headed to the House of Representatives.

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